

Frequently Asked Questions

Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Programs

The following questions and answers related to the placement and use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in non-medical settings.

Do I need to have a physician prescription to buy an AED?

Automated external defibrillators are considered biomedical devices by the United States Food and Drug Administration. As a result, a physician must approve the purchase of the device. Evidence of physician support of the purchase is typically through a “medical authorization form” supplied by the AED vendor.

If I have an AED for use in a public place/building, do I need to have medical director?

While physician involvement in an AED program is recommended, it is not compulsory. Physician oversight of a public AED program in Alaska is not required.

Once I purchase an AED, do I need to notify anyone?

It is important for emergency medical dispatchers to know the locations of AEDs so they can direct rescuers to the device while emergency medical services personnel are en route. The Section of Community Health and EMS has developed a simple form that can be completed and faxed to the Section at 465-4101. The Section will fax copies of the form to the appropriate Regional EMS Office, Emergency Medical Dispatch center, and the nearest emergency medical services agency. The form is available for download from the web site listed below.

How often do I need to offer CPR/AED training?

It is recommended that CPR/AED training be offered frequently enough, usually at least annually, to keep a core group of personnel in the facility trained and appropriately credentialed.

What type of training do employees need if I have an AED available?

AED training programs are relatively short and fairly easy to find. Courses by the American Heart Association, the American Red Cross, and others are designed to give students familiarity with the operation of these easy to use devices. The Department of Health and Social Services is responsible, by statute, for approving AED courses. A complete list of approved training courses can be found at:

http://www.chems.alaska.gov/ems_aed.htm

What protections from civil liability apply to AEDs?

In 1998, legislation was passed in Alaska that redefined the use of an automated external defibrillator as a basic life support skill and provided, through the Good Samaritan Law,¹ some immunity from civil liability to properly trained personnel who use AEDs in a resuscitation attempt and who activate the EMS system. Specifically, the law states, “A person who uses an automated external defibrillator to treat another person in cardiac arrest is not liable for civil damages as a result of an act or omission in treating the other person if the person was properly trained to use the device and activates the emergency medical services system by notifying the appropriate emergency medical services agency.”

For more information, visit the Section of Community Health and EMS extranet web site at:
http://www.chems.alaska.gov/ems_aed.htm

An excellent source of information on the internet is the American Heart Association’s site concerning public access defibrillation at: http://216.185.112.41/cpr_aed/cpr_aed_menu.htm

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¹ Civil Liability for Emergency Aid, AS 09365.090